

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fort Ethan Allen

other names/site number Fort Ethan Allen Park (DHR File No. 000-5819 and Archeological Number 44AR0029)

2. Location

street & number 3829 North Stafford Street not for publication ☒ X

city or town N/A vicinity ☐ N/A

state Virginia code VA county Arlington code 013

zip code 22207

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally statewide ☒ X locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register		
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register		
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register		
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register		
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):		

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply):

- ☐ private
- ☒ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box):

- ☐ building(s)
- ☐ district
- ☒ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions):

Cat: Defense	Sub: Fortification
Public Works	Pump House

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions):

Cat: Landscape	Sub: Park
Recreation	Park
Public Works	Pump House

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions):

N/A

Materials (Enter categories from instructions):

foundation:	N/A
roof:	N/A
walls:	N/A
other:	

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ A
- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B
- Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C
- Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☒ D
- Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A
- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B
- removed from its original location.
- ☐ C
- a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D
- a cemetery.
- ☐ E
- a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F
- a commemorative property.
- ☐ G
- less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Archeology: Historic non-aboriginal

Military

Engineering

Period of Significance

1861-1865

Significant Dates

1861

1865

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Barnard, General John Gross (U. S. Army Corps of Engineers)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: Arlington County Public Library, Virginia Room

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 14.89 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet):

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1)	<u>18</u>	<u>03/15/923</u>	<u>43/10/372</u>	3)	<u>18</u>	<u>03/15/947</u>	<u>43/10/117</u>
2)	<u>18</u>	<u>03/15/992</u>	<u>43/10/131</u>	4)	<u>18</u>	<u>03/15/743</u>	<u>43/10/204</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.							

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Laura V. Trieschmann, Architectural Historian, and Kim A. O'Connell</u>	
organization	<u>EHT Traceries</u>	date <u>August 2003</u>
street & number	<u>1121 Fifth Street, N.W.</u>	telephone <u>202/393-1199</u>
city or town	<u>Washington</u>	state <u>D.C.</u> zip code <u>20001</u>

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Arlington County (contact: Michael Leventhal, Historic Preservation Coordinator)
street & number 21 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 701 telephone 703-228-3813
city or town Arlington state VA zip code 22201

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 “C” Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**Fort Ethan Allen
Arlington County, Virginia**

DHR File Number 000-5819/Archeological Number 44AR0029

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Fort Ethan Allen was built in September 1861 as a large bastion-style fort, located in the highlands of present-day Arlington County, Virginia. When the fort was built, the site was surrounded mostly by farmland and forests. Nearby trees and other vegetation were denuded to allow for clear lines of sight toward other fortifications and approaches to the city. The fort was connected by a long series of trenches and earthworks to nearby Fort Marcy and the Potomac River. The fort consisted of four main faces, with additional salient angles built into the north and east faces. It maintained a perimeter of 768 yards with emplacements for thirty-four guns. Interior structures included two bombproofs, magazines, and other supporting structures. Today, Fort Ethan Allen retains several major aboveground features. These include large earthworks, one bombproof, gun platforms, and traces of magazines. One outlier trench (contributing site) remains to the southwest of the fort. Fort Ethan Allen's remaining interior structures remain clearly visible and understandable as distinct historic resources. Furthermore, the fort's south face, centrally located bombproof, and remaining north face structures work together to strongly convey an understanding of the fort's historic scale. A ca. 1944 pump house (noncontributing building) is located north of the fort.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Site

Fort Ethan Allen is centrally located between two other Civil War-era forts--Fort Marcy and Fort C.F. Smith. A unit of the National Park Service, Fort Marcy is a well-preserved bastion fort located near Chain Bridge along the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Fort C.F. Smith, a lunette-style fort, is owned and interpreted by Arlington County and is located on North 24th Street.

When it was built in 1861, Fort Ethan Allen was situated on the northern end of what was then called Alexandria County (now Arlington County) in northeastern Virginia. Largely rural, the county consisted mainly of woodlands, farms, and pastures.¹ Its southern end, anchored by the port city of Alexandria, was largely flat. On the county's northern end where Fort Ethan Allen was located, deep ravines and streams cut between the hills toward the Potomac River. Fort Ethan Allen's location was chosen because the site sat on a plateau bounded by the natural ravine known as Pimmit Run. During the Civil War, the hilly, tree-covered landscape around the fort was stripped of vegetation. This opened the fort's lines of sight toward other fortifications, such as nearby Fort Marcy, and toward avenues of approach to the Chain Bridge and Washington, D.C.²

Although it remains in its original location, Fort Ethan Allen and the outlier trench are now encircled by suburban development. The fort sits near the intersection of Old Glebe Road and Military Road, the latter a major connector route in the northern part of the county. The surrounding neighborhood of Old Glebe is primarily residential, dominated by single-

¹ Sherman Pratt, *Arlington County, Virginia: A Modern History*, (Chelsea, MI: Book Crafters, 1997), p. 13.

² J.G. Barnard, *A Report on the Defenses of Washington to the Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1871), pp. 46-47.

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family houses. A community center with parking lot and playground are situated just to the south of the fort and a small county pump house is located to the immediate north of the fort's northern bastion. The outlier trench is located along Old Glebe Road, south of North Stafford Street. In contrast to the area's denuded appearance during the Civil War, this part of Arlington is now heavily vegetated, with thick stands of mature trees. Yet the general topography of the area--marked by numerous ravines, streams, and rolling hills--remains similar to its Civil War-era appearance. The fort and outlier trench, now owned by Arlington County, is designated parkland known as Fort Ethan Allen Park.

Fort's Exterior Design

Fort Ethan Allen was designed as bastion-style fort, which means that it has a star-shaped form that provides defense by allowing crossfire from its multiple angles in the event of an attack. With a perimeter of 768 yards, the fort had four main sides facing roughly north, south, east, and west. Additional salient angles were built into the north and east faces. Each face had a slanting parapet up to nine feet high and eight to twelve feet thick, with a six-foot ditch dug at the parapet's outside edge. The outside walls were covered with grass.³

Most of Fort Ethan Allen's exterior faces no longer exist. Old Glebe Road runs in a roughly southwest-northeast direction along what was once the fort's western face. A few houses sit on the site of the southwest bastion. Although no trace of the parapets is visible, the houses are at a slightly higher elevation than neighboring lots. A third of the south face is extant including four gun platforms and 15- to 20-foot-high earthworks, although the 1957 addition to the Madison Community Center encroached on portions of the fort's southeast bastion. The fort's eastern and northern faces are no longer visible. The park's eastern corner now faces the back yards of residential houses fronting Military Road. A county pump house was constructed circa 1944 to the immediate north of the fort. The building is edged on the east side by a drainage ditch that appears to coincide with the trenches of the northeast salient angle.

Interior

As a relatively large fort, Fort Ethan Allen contained numerous man-made structures both for military defense and for the support of the soldiers' daily activities. The fort had regularly placed platforms for thirty-four cannons primarily along the west and south faces. Earthen ramps led up to the wood-planked gun platforms. In addition, the fort had platforms for two large 10-inch mortars, one near the southeast bastion and the other near the northwest bastion. Four magazines were built to store ammunition, with one located on the south face near the southwest bastion, another along the southeast bastion, a third near the salient angle on the fort's east face, and a fourth on the fort's northern face. Two long bombproof shelters were built in the interior, stretching roughly east to west, with the larger of the two centrally located within the fort. Magazines and bombproofs were generally constructed on stone foundations with timber walls covered with a combination of tar, resin, sand, and clay. Entrances to these structures were at ground level and faced away from the exposed fronts. The locations of the flagstaff, well, and guardhouse were located at the northern, more sheltered half of the fort.

³ Benjamin Franklin Cooling, III, and Walton H. Owen, II, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington*, (Shippensburg, PA: White Maine Publishing Co., 1988), p. 118.

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Because the gun platforms were connected to the fort's interior parapets, the destruction of the fort's north, west, and east faces has also erased any trace of the original gun platforms in these areas. On the south face, however, the remains of four gun platforms are clearly visible, albeit heavily overgrown with vegetation. The south face magazine also retains a high level of integrity. Mounds are visible on either side of an indentation that indicates the magazine's former entrance.

The bombproof closest to this south face has been leveled, and the area is now sodded and used as a children's soccer field. The field is bounded on its northern side by the remains of the large, centrally located bombproof. Like the south face earthworks, this bombproof is overgrown with trees and vegetation, and no timber remains. However, the earthwork's large size--at least 10 feet in height--conveys a strong sense of the structure's original scale and its dominant position at the center of the fort.

The northern edge of the fort contains visible remains of a large magazine and the fort's guardhouse. Like the magazine on the south face, the former interior and entrance to the north face magazine is visible between two mounds that were once its walls. These works are also overgrown with vegetation and no timber or hardware remains. On the eastern face, a slight dimple indicates the site of the fort flagstaff.

The northern end of the fort is dominated by a dog exercise area, located between the extant bombproof and the visible north face structures. The area is surrounded by a chain-link fence, which has been installed in an irregular shape around these resources. Other permanent structures include a wooden kiosk, a trash container, and a concrete walkway. Four picnic tables are located throughout the site as well. The dog area is covered with a mulch layer, estimated to be about 20 inches deep, which is thought to have buried once-visible brick remnants of the fort's well.⁴

Related Structures and Earthworks within the Fort

During the Civil War, military barracks, mess houses, and a row of officers' quarters were built just to the north of Fort Ethan Allen, near present-day Military Road. A signal tower overlooked these structures. No trace of these structures remains. On the fort's south face, a covered way led to outworks that protected Fort Ethan Allen and connected the fort to nearby Fort Marcy. These earthworks and trenches swung around to the south and east toward the Potomac River, forming a circle of protection around the Chain Bridge. Today, the covered way no longer exists - probably destroyed with the southwest bastion, but remnants of the outworks can still be seen not far from Fort Ethan Allen. One of the outlier trenches, a rifle pit, is located to the southwest of the southwestern face of the fort. This discontinuous section of the fortification runs parallel to the wall of the fort. The remains of the trench include a straight earth depression about twenty-five feet wide and twenty-two feet long. The connecting lines of the trench have been destroyed by the construction of Old Glebe Road and residential dwellings.

⁴ Walton Owen, interview by Kim A. O'Connell, Alexandria, Virginia, May 1, 2003.

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Non-historic Pump House

Constructed circa 1944 by Arlington County, the one-story masonry pump house stands at 4451 North Old Glebe Road. Reached by a short gravel drive from Old Glebe Road, the pump house is just to the immediate north-northwest of the fort's northern bastion. A cross-gabled roof clad in slate tiles covers the L-shaped structure, which is clad in all stretcher-bond brick. An interior-end chimney with a corbeled cap rises from the west elevation. A projecting course of rowlock headers and alternating projecting headers forms the cornice. The single window openings hold 6/6 double-hung, wood sash with metal security wire and rowlock sills. Several of the larger openings have metal louvered vents. The entry has a flush metal door. A large vehicular opening is located in the southern end of the west elevation.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Ethan Allen is significant as one of the major fortifications of the Federal defensive strategy protecting the nation's capital during the Civil War. Constructed in 1861, Fort Ethan Allen is the best-preserved example of a bastion fort in Arlington County, Virginia. Built like other northern Virginia defenses, the fort was constructed following the engineering directives of General John G. Barnard of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. The walls of the fort, however, were made stronger because it protected Chain Bridge, one of the most significant approaches over the Potomac River to Washington, D.C. Thus, Fort Ethan Allen is a significant example of a mid-nineteenth-century fortification known for its design and engineering. The Chain Bridge forts considerably strengthened the web of fortifications that defended the northern flank of the Arlington Line, and because of its size and location, Fort Ethan Allen was a critical element in this corner of the Washington defenses. The remnants of the original breastworks, bombproof shelter, magazine, guardhouse, and well represent one of the largest groups of Civil War earthworks in Arlington County. Furthermore, as a first generation fort, Fort Ethan Allan initially housed tents and garrisoned troops inside its parapet walls for extended periods of time, and therefore, will most likely provide a greater wealth of archaeological resources on the interior than forts constructed later in the war. Fort Ethan Allan, commissioned into service between 1861 and 1865, is significant under Criteria A, C, and D of the National Register of Historic Places as a Civil War fortification.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pre-War History of Fort Ethan Allan

The property on which Fort Ethan Allen as well as Fort Marcy is located, was owned by Gilbert Vanderwerken (1810-1894). Originally from Albany, New York, Vanderwerken was most notably recognized for introducing the omnibus, an urban version of the stagecoach, in Newark, New Jersey, in 1826. With the bankruptcy of the first omnibus line in 1837 because of the national depression of that year, Vanderwerken relocated to Washington, D.C. between 1848 and 1850 to take personal control of Washington's first successful omnibus line. The Vanderwerken Company line, closely following the horse-drawn coach routes of the early 1800s, traveled from Georgetown to the Navy Yard via M Street and Pennsylvania Avenue for a one-way fare of 12.5 cents. The omnibus, seating twelve passengers, bore the names of persons, historical events, or pictures of other fashionable modes of transportation on the side panels. The stables were located at 3222 M Street in Georgetown.¹ Living in Washington, D.C., Vanderwerken purchased 1,316 acres of Virginia property as pastureland for the horses. About 1852, Vanderwerken improved the farm by having a dwelling erected on "a hilltop in a grove of fine oak trees at the northwest corner of Little Falls and Glebe Roads."² The dwelling was intended to be used as rental housing and as a summer retreat for the family.

During the Civil War, the Vanderwerken family remained in Georgetown, having agreed to allow Union General Winfield Scott Hancock use of the house known as Falls Grove as an army hospital. In return, Hancock guaranteed protection of the buildings and fine grove of trees. "The General used the two-story carpenter shop as his headquarters."³ Because of the strategic location of the property, it also became the site of Forts Ethan Allan and Marcy.

The Civil War: Military Defenses of Washington

On April 17, 1861, five days after the first shot was fired at Fort Sumter in South Carolina, the Virginia Convention passed a secession ordinance. The citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia voted to ratify secession from the Union, and on May 23, 1861, the Commonwealth officially became a part of the Confederacy. With that act, the war in Virginia began and defense of the nation's capital became imperative. Washington, D.C., sprawled along the low lying banks of the muddy Potomac River, was a grandly planned, but unfinished metropolis with six scattered government buildings, "a few dubious statues and one-third of an obelisk," government greenhouses, the Navy Yard, and Observatory. As Margaret Leech remarked in *Reveille in Washington: 1860-1865*, "...there was nothing more to be seen within the city limits."⁴ The nation's capital was accessible to an enemy from any side.⁵ The city's founders had assumed that the only real attack on

¹ E.D. Merrill, "Changing Fashions in Transportation," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, Volume 48-49. (Washington, D.C.: Columbia Historical Society, 1946-1947), p. 161.

² Eleanor Lee Templeman, *Arlington Heritage: Vignettes of a Virginia County*. (New York, New York: Avenel Books, 1959), p. 126.

³ Templeman, p. 126.

⁴ Margaret Leech, *Reveille in Washington: 1860-1865*, (New York, NY: Carroll & Graf publishers, Inc., 1941, reprinted 1989), p. 7.

⁵ Benjamin Franklin Cooling III, and Walton H. Owen II. *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington*. (Shippensburg, Pa.: White Mane Publishing Co., 1988), p. 1.

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the capital would come by sea, and the Potomac River would act as a buffer against such an advance. Thus, Fort Washington, built in 1809 on the Maryland side of the river opposite Mount Vernon, was the city's only major fortification before the Civil War.⁶ Despite its shortcomings, Washington, D.C. was viewed as the symbol of the Union shortly after the fall of Fort Sumter.

During the initial weeks of the war, all Union efforts were devoted to completing the initial formal defense of the southern approach to the capital. As explained by Benjamin Franklin Cooling, III and Walton H. Owen, II in *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington*, "little thought or attention was given to more general studies or reconnaissance necessary for planning a circumferential defense system.... A Union disaster at Manassas would be required to cultivate awareness that the capital was still quite inadequately protected."⁷ Concentration on the fortification of the city was rapidly undertaken by Major General George B. McClellan, who succeeded Brigadier General Irvin McDowell as Union Army commander on the Potomac. In August 1861, General John Gross Barnard of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers was placed in charge of the fort construction, with particular emphasis placed on Arlington Heights and other key locations along the Potomac River.

The locations of the garrisons and fortifications were chosen after a series of unprecedented balloon ascensions over the city. These flights resulted in detailed sketches of the region, allowing military officials to understand the importance of the hills encircling the city and the potentially vulnerable approaches. The main forts were placed at half-mile interval and supplemented by numerous smaller batteries and often connected by rifle pits, offering nearly uninterrupted fields of fire.⁸ The Union forts to the south and west of the Potomac River in Virginia were divided into three major groups:

- the forts protecting the city of Alexandria to the south;
- the forts protecting the county's crucial center, known as the Arlington Line, including Fort Whipple (site of present-day Fort Myer) and Fort C.F. Smith; and
- the forts on the northern tip of the Arlington Line, defending the approaches to Chain Bridge, including Fort Marcy and Fort Ethan Allen.

By war's end, the number of forts would grow to sixty-eight major fortifications, twenty-two of which were located in present-day Arlington County. The total perimeter of the system was about thirty-seven miles, including twenty miles of rifle trenches and thirty-two miles of military roads. By 1865, the forts and batteries of the Arlington Line had gun emplacements for 1,120 guns and over 800 cannons and 98 mortars mounted. General Barnard wrote that the defenses of Washington were impressive, surpassing anything comparable in Europe at the time. Similarly, Union General George McClellan told the Secretary of War Edwin Stanton that the capital was at last secured against attack. "The extensive fortifications erected by the labor of our troops enable a small garrison to hold it against a numerous army," McClellan

⁶ Frederick Gutheim, consultant with the National Capital Planning Commission. *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), p. 61.

⁷ Cooling and Owen, p. 5.

⁸ Cooling and Owen, p. 30.

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noted. "The enemy has been held in check; the state of Maryland is securely in our possession; the detached counties of Virginia are again within the pale of our laws."⁹

The federal government exercised its power of eminent domain to build the fortifications, including connecting roads between them, regardless of whether construction damaged or destroyed residents' fields, orchards, or houses. "Despite injustices to local property owners," write historians Benjamin Franklin Cooling, III and Walter H. Owen, II, "the authorities felt the interests of national security dictated such action."¹⁰ Many residents fled, but those who remained were hostile to the 10,000 Union troops that occupied the Virginia line. "It takes little imagination to picture what this occupation meant to Arlington County," writes historian Cornelia Rose. "In 1861, the County was a rural community, the people largely dependent upon farming as their livelihood. Forts thrown up right and left, trenches dug through pastures and gardens, forests cut down, troops encamped all about--the impact must have been tremendous."¹¹

⁹ Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Symbol, Sword & Shield: Defending Washington during the Civil War*, (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1975), p. 100, and pp. 238-239.

¹⁰ Cooling and Owen, p. 6.

¹¹ Cornelia B. Rose, "Civil War Forts in Arlington," *The Northern Virginia Sun*, March 14, 1960.

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The Chain Bridge Sector

One of the most significant approaches over the Potomac River was the near the city's northwest border at Chain Bridge. First known as Falls Bridge, Chain Bridge was initially a chain suspension bridge, built in 1808. Chain Bridge, located three miles northwest above Georgetown, spanned the Potomac River and connected the Palisades in Washington, D.C. with the Leesburg Turnpike and neighboring parts of Virginia. At the outbreak of the Civil War, the span was the sole existing bridge between Washington and Harper's Ferry. The ordinary uses of the bridge ceased in 1861, when the structure was deemed to have high military importance, not necessarily in the protection of the capital, but rather for maintaining communication and troop movement.¹² "It was deemed indispensable not only that this bridge should be within our lines, but so far within as to be protected from artillery fire from hostile batteries," stated General Barnard. "The possession of the Chain Bridge communication with the opposite shore of the Potomac, incidentally important in a defensive point of view, was essential to the operations of our forces in Virginia and to the prestige of our arms."¹³ Battery Martin Scott and an unfortified field gun battery at the northern end provided immediate defense of Chain Bridge on the east side of the Potomac River.

The Chain Bridge forts considerably strengthened the web of fortifications that defended the northern flank of the Arlington line. Forts Marcy and Ethan Allen were connected strategically and logistically to Fort C.F. Smith and Fort Strong in particular. Five or six auxiliary batteries and several field gun positions provided long-range coordinated fire with these four forts on the Virginia side, along with Fort Sumner on the Maryland side of the Potomac River.¹⁸ Batteries of importance included Battery Cameron, Battery Parrott, Battery Kemble, Battery Martin Scott, and Battery Vermont in Washington, D.C. Because of its size and location, Fort Ethan Allen was a critical element in this northwestern corner of the Washington defenses.¹⁴

¹² Cooling and Owen, p. 27.

¹³ John G. Barnard, *A Report on the Defenses of Washington to the Chief of Engineers, US. Army*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1871), pp. 13-14.

¹⁴ Walton Owen, interview by Kim A. O'Connell, Alexandria, Virginia, May 1, 2003.

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Civil War Engineering at Fort Ethan Allen

Fort Ethan Allen is an important example of the design and engineering of fortifications, which, as a building type, underwent great advances during the Civil War. At the outbreak of the Civil War, troops built defensive works based on the major text by Dennis Hart Mahan in *Treatise on Field Fortifications*, published in 1836. Yet, these guidelines proved inadequate for protracted hostilities in the mid-19th century. The thickness and design of parapets, for example, were “suitable only for temporary fieldworks,” wrote General John G. Barnard, chief engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, “and experience taught us that some modifications were necessary to give to the defenses of Washington that degree of durability which their prolonged maintenance demanded.”¹⁵

The forts of northern Virginia shared several similar physical characteristics. Each had a slanting parapet 12 to 18 feet high and at least 12 feet thick, with a six-foot ditch dug at the parapet’s outside edge. The outside walls were covered with sod. On the inside of the parapets, vertical posts were riveted to the inside of the parapet where possible, and a banquette or wooden platform was built for the infantry to stand on. Magazines and bombproofs were generally constructed of timber covered with a combination of tar, resin, sand, and clay. Bombproofs were centrally located inside the fort’s walls. Entrances were at ground level and uniformly faced Washington.¹⁶ Methods of constructing magazines and bombproofs varied with location. In the forts south of the Potomac River, the walls of these structures were made of hewn timber bents. North of the Potomac River, where timber was more plentiful, round timber posts were placed vertically in close contact.¹⁷

Fort Ethan Allen was built like other northern Virginia defenses following the engineering directives of General John G. Barnard. The walls of the fort, however, were made stronger because it protected such a strategic location. Construction of the fort began on September 24, 1861, undertaken by the 33rd New York Artillery with other commands assisting. These included the Iron Brigade, the 11th Rhode Island, the 79th and 133rd New York, the 22nd Connecticut, and the Philadelphia Brigade. The fortification, which was completed in a matter of weeks, was originally known as Fort Baker, in honor of Colonel E.D. Baker of the 1st California, whose members were part of the regiment that helped construct the fort.¹⁸ It was later renamed Fort Ethan Allen in honor of the famous Revolutionary War commander from Vermont who played a prominent part in the capture of Fort Ticonderoga in 1775. During its construction, President Abraham Lincoln visited Fort Ethan Allen.¹⁹

Fort Ethan Allen was particularly well outfitted for defense, although it was never to see any military action. The fortification was a large bastion fort, boasting a perimeter of 768 yards. Unlike many of the other fortifications, the thickness of the parapets on exposed fronts was increased, and other improvements were made to internal structures. It

¹⁵ Interview with Walton Owen.

¹⁶ Cooling and Owen, p. 17.

¹⁷ Rose, “Civil War Forts in Arlington.”

¹⁸ David V. Miller, *The Defenses of Washington during the Civil War*, (Buffalo, New York: Mr. Copy, 1976), pp. 191-197.

¹⁹ Interview with Walton Owen.

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contained emplacements for thirty-four guns as well as four magazines, two bombproof shelters, and a guardhouse. The armaments of the fort included two 8-inch howitzers, three 32-pounder guns, three 32-pounder howitzers, four 24-pounder guns, six 12-pounder Napoleon guns, three 6-pounder guns, eleven 30-pounder Parrotts, three 10-pounder Parrotts, four 10-inch mortars, and two 24-pounder Coehorn mortars.²⁰

A line of trenches and roads, which were used to transport troops and supplies, connected the fortifications of the Arlington Line. The complex and zigzagging network of earthworks connecting the forts was called the “tête-de-pont,” which means bridge head.²¹ The outlier trenches, one of which is extant along Old North Glebe Road, was a rifle trench that connected the forts and formed a line of defense that was unseen from the forts themselves. The trenches were dug to a sufficient depth within the slope of about 45 degrees, with earth thrown up from an inside excavation. The three-foot depth of the excavation, in conjunction with the embankment, provided a cover of 7-1/2 feet. The banquette was made on the natural surface of the ground. To facilitate access from the trench an intermediate step, two feet in width, broke the continuity of the earth slope. The bottom of the trench was graded to throw the drainage to the rear, and outlets for it were provided.²² The several country roads that radiated from Washington, D.C., Georgetown, and Alexandria provided easy access to the line of defensive works. But as Benjamin Franklin Cooling, III and Walton H. Owen, II explain in *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington*, “but there existed, at first, no adequate means of communication along any portion of the line, and none at all along some portions of it. The necessity for such communication roads became apparent as soon as the general line of works was established. The conditions governing their location and constriction were, that they should not be seen from any ground that an enemy might be able to occupy in front, that they should be as direct as practicable consistently with easy grades, and that they should have sufficient width for the movement over them of field batteries or army trains.”²³ The aggregate length of the military roads constructed at the onset of the war in the defense of Washington, D.C. was about thirty-two miles.²⁴ The first of these roads was constructed in the fall of 1861 and was specifically laid to connect the isolated works at the Chain Bridge with the right of the Arlington Line. Known today as Military Road, the roadway was about three miles in length and was laid out by Captain B.S. Alexander. The road, completed by details of troops in two or three days, ran “mainly through a broken and densely wooded country.”²⁵ This road runs along the northern edge of Fort Ethan Allen.

²⁰ Cooling and Owen, p. 118.

²¹ “Report on the Fort Ethan Allen Outlier Trench,” Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development, p. 1.

²² Cooling and Owen, pp. 22-23.

²³ Cooling and Owen, p. 25.

²⁴ Cooling and Owen, p. 26.

²⁵ Templeman, pp. 114-115; Cooling and Owen, p. 25.

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Fort Ethan Allen was a “first generation fort,” being one of the first fortifications erected early in the years of the war. First generation forts allowed garrison troops to live in tents inside the forts for long periods of time, while later forts had barracks located outside the walls of the fortification. Eventually, however, barracks were eventually built outside Fort Ethan Allen. This included officers quarters, barracks, mess houses, and cook houses. The large size of the bastion fort was garrisoned by as many as 1,000 men. Soldiers stationed at Fort Ethan Allen during its tenure included:

- 138th New York Infantry
- 169th New York Infantry
- 4th New York Infantry (Heavy Artillery)
- 40th Massachusetts
- 2nd Massachusetts (Heavy Artillery)
- 127th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 11th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 120th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 126th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 127th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 129th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 72nd Pennsylvania Infantry
- 71st Pennsylvania Infantry
- 106th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 69th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 100th Pennsylvania Infantry
- 169th Ohio Infantry²⁶

A month after the completion of the forts and associated earthworks, the Eleventh Regiment of Rhode Island Volunteers began to clear the forest. A member of the company, R.W. Rock, noted upon arriving at the site that he could see the dome of the Capitol. Presumably, based on this account, the forest was already being cleared between the forts and the Potomac River to allow for the construction of the fortification and/or by the local farmers. Rock explained his efforts:

²⁶ Cooling and Owen, p. 119; David V. Miller, *The Defenses of Washington during the Civil War*, (Buffalo, New York: Mr. Copy, 1976), p. 191.

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...at the word of command the men walked into the woods and plied them with an energy that made the trees bow like grass before the mower's scythe. Captains, lieutenants and men, New York, Connecticut and Rhode Island, vied with each other in the work, and acre after acre was bared to the broad beams of the mid-day sun, and cleared for the range of the guns of Fort Ethan Allen, and to prevent the rebels from building a battery unseen by the Union commander.... In about four hours, ten or more acres were laid low by six or seven hundred men. The ringing music of the axes was inspiring. The crash of falling trees, many of them one hundred, and acres of them fifty feet high and upwards, resounded for a long distance around, and cheer after cheer burst from the throats of the excited men.²⁷

²⁷ R.W. Rock [pseud.], *History of the Eleventh Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, in the War of the Rebellion*. (Providence, Rhode Island: Providence Press Company, 1881), pp. 25-26.

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Unlike many Civil War sites, Fort Ethan Allen is significant not because of a monumental military action that took place there, but because its existence helped to prevent that very thing from happening. The federal government had spent \$1.4 million on the construction and deployed 20,000 soldiers in the defense of the nation's capital. Ultimately, the expense was justified as the Confederate army never engaged in a large-scale attack on Washington, D.C.²⁸ In the summer of 1861, before Fort Ethan Allen was built, Confederate skirmishers penetrated as far into northern Virginia as Hall's Hill, Minor's Hill, and Arlington Mill, all located in or near present-day Arlington County, to engage in small skirmishes with Union army patrols. This never happened again once Fort Ethan Allen and the rest of the Arlington Line was constructed.²⁹ Thus, the value of these forts as a deterrent is evident in the fact that they protected what is known in military parlance as "key terrain," which is ground that gives a distinct advantage to the force that occupies or controls it.³⁰

For his part, Confederate General Robert E. Lee took his army north only twice, and both times he gave Washington, D.C., a wide berth. The first time, Lee's army crossed the Potomac near Sharpsburg, Maryland, meeting the Union forces at the battle of Antietam in September 1862. Nearly a year later, in July 1863, the armies met at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Lee had crossed the Pennsylvania border via Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.³¹ Even after the Confederates decisively won the August 1862 battle of Second Manassas in northern Virginia, they did not follow the retreating Union troops. Southern cavalry considered pursuing, according to noted Lee biographer Douglas Southall Freeman, but "the long Federal columns were moving steadily toward the Washington entrenchments, whither it would be futile to pursue them."³²

In July 1864, Confederate leaders attempted to deliver a shock to the war-weary North by staging an attack on the Washington defenses. Lieutenant General Jubal Early led the raid, but he skirted the Arlington Line and entered Maryland farther north, where he then swung the army south in a maneuver against the Maryland defenses of Washington. After a few inconsequential skirmishes, Early hastily retreated to Virginia.³³ This action demonstrates not only the strength of the Washington defenses as a whole, but of the Arlington Line in particular, which Early perceived to be so formidable that he avoided them completely.

²⁸ Cooling and Owen, p. 16.

²⁹ Nan and Ross Netherton, *Arlington County in Virginia: A Pictorial History*, (Norfolk, Virginia: The Donning Company, 1987), p. 62.

³⁰ Paul Hawke, Letter to Ron Carlee, Arlington County Manager, April 28, 2002. Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development.

³¹ Edwin C. Bearss, "The Role of Arlington County in the Civil War." (lecture given at the Arlington Heritage Alliance annual meeting, Arlington, Virginia, April 30, 2003.)

³² Douglas Southall Freeman, *Lee* (abridged), (New York, New York: Collier Books, 1991), p. 244.

³³ Cooling and Owen, pp. 14-15.

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Benjamin Franklin Cooling, III and Walton H. Owen, II document in *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington* the limited warfare activity of Fort Ethan Allen by recounting General John Mosby's descent on nearby Langley, Virginia:

Garrison life could not fail to become monotonous and irksome unless coupled with incidents of real warfare such as some of the veterans had experienced, and the younger members of the regiment were hoping for. It would have afforded some of the regiment immense satisfaction to have occupied Fort Ethan Allen with an attacking party in its front...but the only thing of the kind we have to record is a remarkable dream of one of the men, in which he saw the Confederates advancing up the ravine over the abatis across the moat, a goodly number of them scaling the parapet, while our boys, "en deshabille," with nightcaps and artillery hats hastily donned, and muskets in their hands, rushed to the defense.... But alas, this glory should have all been confined to the night and the imagination of one sleepy sentinel.³⁴

Fort Ethan Allen was one of twenty-five forts that were initially designated to remain in operation after the end of hostilities by April 1865. However, by the fall of 1865, the fort was ordered abandoned. The engineers sold used lumber, timber, hardware, and tools from the fort at public auction. The dwelling at 3311 North Glebe Road, known as Bellevue, was constructed with timbers retrieved from Fort Ethan Allen, possibly as compensation from the government for the use of the family's land during the war.³⁵

Post-War Activity at Fort Ethan Allen

Permanent fortifications like Fort Ethan Allen, military roads, and even temporary settlements built for the war effort became the building blocks of new, burgeoning neighborhoods. As one historian puts it, "Suburban Maryland and Virginia were now oriented to Washington rather than to their respective state capital."³⁶ Furthermore, despite the close of the war, the federal government retained its stronghold in northern Virginia, which ultimately led to the creation of Arlington National Cemetery and Freedmen's Village, both located on the grounds of Arlington House, the former home of Robert E. Lee.

The property on which Fort Ethan Allen was constructed was returned to the heirs of Gilbert Vanderwerken following the war. The area, owned and subsequently subdivided by Alfred Grunwell and his wife, Jane Vanderwerken, was primarily used as farmland. By 1870, Robert Walker had purchased 200 acres in the neighborhood later known as Old Glebe and, in 1871, had a dwelling erected. The property owned by Walker also included Fort Ethan Allen and the remains of its

³⁴ Cooling and Owen, pp. 118-119.

³⁵ Templeman, p. 132; Walton Owen, "Historical Background and Impact Assessment of Park Activities on the Historic Resource of Fort Ethan Allen Park," June 15, 2000, p. 4. Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development.

³⁶ Gutheim, p. 69.

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encircling trenches, which he worked to maintain.³⁷ Recognition of the Civil War fortification began in the early part of the 20th century, when tour groups and individuals interested in the defenses of Washington began coming to the area.

By the turn of the 20th century, noted scientist and civic activist George N. Saegmuller, who owned a 150-acre estate not far away in the northern part of the county, owned Fort Ethan Allen. Saegmuller believed that the children in the Chain Bridge area along Military Road and Old Glebe Road should not have to travel so far to attend the Carne School, located at what are now 24th Street and Glebe Road.³⁸ Accordingly, in 1901, he donated property and oversaw the construction of the Saegmuller School, which was named in his honor. The two-story, wood-frame school was constructed immediately adjacent to Fort Ethan Allen. In 1939, Madison Elementary School replaced the Saegmuller structure. The two-story brick school, designed by Allen C. Minnix, was the first Public Works Administration (PWA) project undertaken in Arlington County. The school was originally known as Woodmont, but the name was eventually changed to honor President James Madison, who hailed from Virginia. Although construction of the elementary school did not impact the physical integrity of Fort Ethan Allen, the expansion of the educational facility in 1957-1958 destroyed a portion of the deteriorating southeast bastion. The school closed in the 1970s, although the building is now used as a community center.³⁹

In 1965, an Arlington County marker was placed along the southwestern bastion of Fort Ethan Allen to commemorate the fortification's significance associated with the defenses of Washington between 1861 and 1865. The marker reads:

This embankment was the south face of Fort Ethan Allen, a bastioned earthwork built in September 1861 to command all of the approaches to Chain Bridge south of Pimmit Run. The fort has a perimeter of 736 yards with emplacements for 39 guns. The embankments which still remain were the south face less the west bastion; an interior bombproof shelter for protection against artillery fire from Hall's Hill; the magazine and guardhouse near the north face; and a part of the east face.

In the 1970s, the Arlington Soccer Association began using the school field for games. In 1986, the County Parks Division moved the location of the playground farther into the historic location of the fort, but community protests resulted in its return to its original location between the south bastion and the larger of the bombproofs. As a result, the smaller bombproof was leveled and sodded. The Madison dog exercise area, subject of controversy because of its perceived

³⁷ "Fort Ethan Allen is Pure History," *The Northern Virginia Sun*, Arlington County, Virginia, April 11, 1957.

³⁸ John Fielding Burns, "George Nicholas Saegmuller," *The Arlington Historical Magazine*, Vol. 3, No. 2, October 1966, pp. 51-53.

³⁹ Owen, p. 5.

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destruction of the fort's historic resources, was created in 1986 to the immediate north of the larger bombproof over the fort's well.

Fort Ethan Allen, which consists today of 14.89 acres owned by Arlington County, includes the Civil War site, multi-use fields, playgrounds, a basketball court, nature area, and dog exercise area all within walking distance of the Madison Community Center. Arlington County designated Fort Ethan Allen as a local historic district in 1978. The outlier trench was listed as a local historic district in 1995. In 1996, the site was placed on the Virginia Civil War Trails network, along with Fort C.F. Smith and Freedmen's Village.

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

Fort Ethan Allen is located at 3829 North Stafford Street and the outlier trench is located on Old Glebe Road, just south of Stafford Street, in Arlington County, Virginia. Old Glebe Road, the western border of the fort, and Military Road intersect at the north of the property. The Madison Community Center and parking lot at North Stafford Street form the southern boundary of the fort. The playing fields of the community center serve as the eastern border. Arlington County owns the sites of Fort Ethan Allen and the trench.

Boundary Justification

The western border of the fort is created by Old Glebe Road, which was laid along the western bastion of Fort Ethan Allen in the latter part of the 19th century. The southern boundary, including the remnants of the southeastern bastion, is just to the north of the community center's parking lot. The boundary runs from the marker at the southwestern corner of the property to the northwest corner of the porte-cochere constructed as part of the addition in 1957-1958. The southeastern section of the bastion was destroyed with the construction of this addition and is therefore excluded. The eastern border of the property runs from the northwest corner of the porte-cochere to the site of the magazines and flagstaff at the northeastern side of the fort. The eastern wall of the fort has since been lost, however, much of the interior grounds of the fort are included because of their archeological potential. The construction of two 20th-century dwellings at 3912 and 3916 Military Road in the Fort Ethan Allen Subdivision destroyed the northeastern corner of the bastion; thus the property runs from the rear of these dwellings to the outer face of the northern salient angles. At this point, the property intersects at Old Glebe Road.

The trench is located at 4311 Old Glebe Road, with public access along the southern border of the property at 4317 Old Glebe Road. The trench was the southwestern earthwork connecting and protecting the Arlington Line forts. A view northward to the fort can be seen between 4325 Old Glebe Road and 3850 North Stafford Street. Woodlands edge the property with obscured suburban housing surrounding.

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All photographs are of:

**FORT ETHAN ALLEN
Arlington County, Virginia
VDHR File Number: 000-5819
Archeological Number: 44AR0029
E.H.T. Tracerics, Inc., photographer**

All negatives are stored with the Department of Historic Resources:

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking northwest, at southern bastion
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 1 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking east, at southeast end of southern bastion
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 2 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking west, towards southernmost magazine and bombproof
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 3 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking northwest, at northernmost bombproof
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 4 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking southwest, at northernmost bombproof
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 5 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking northeast, at northeastern magazine
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 6 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking northwest, showing historical markers
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 7 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking southwest, at southernmost bombproof
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 8 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking southwest, at salient on northern end
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 9 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking northeast, at southern bastion
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 10 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking southeast, at outlier trench
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 11 of 12

DATE: September 2003
VIEW OF: Looking northwest, from east end of outlier trench
NEG. NO.: 20946
PHOTO: 12 of 12

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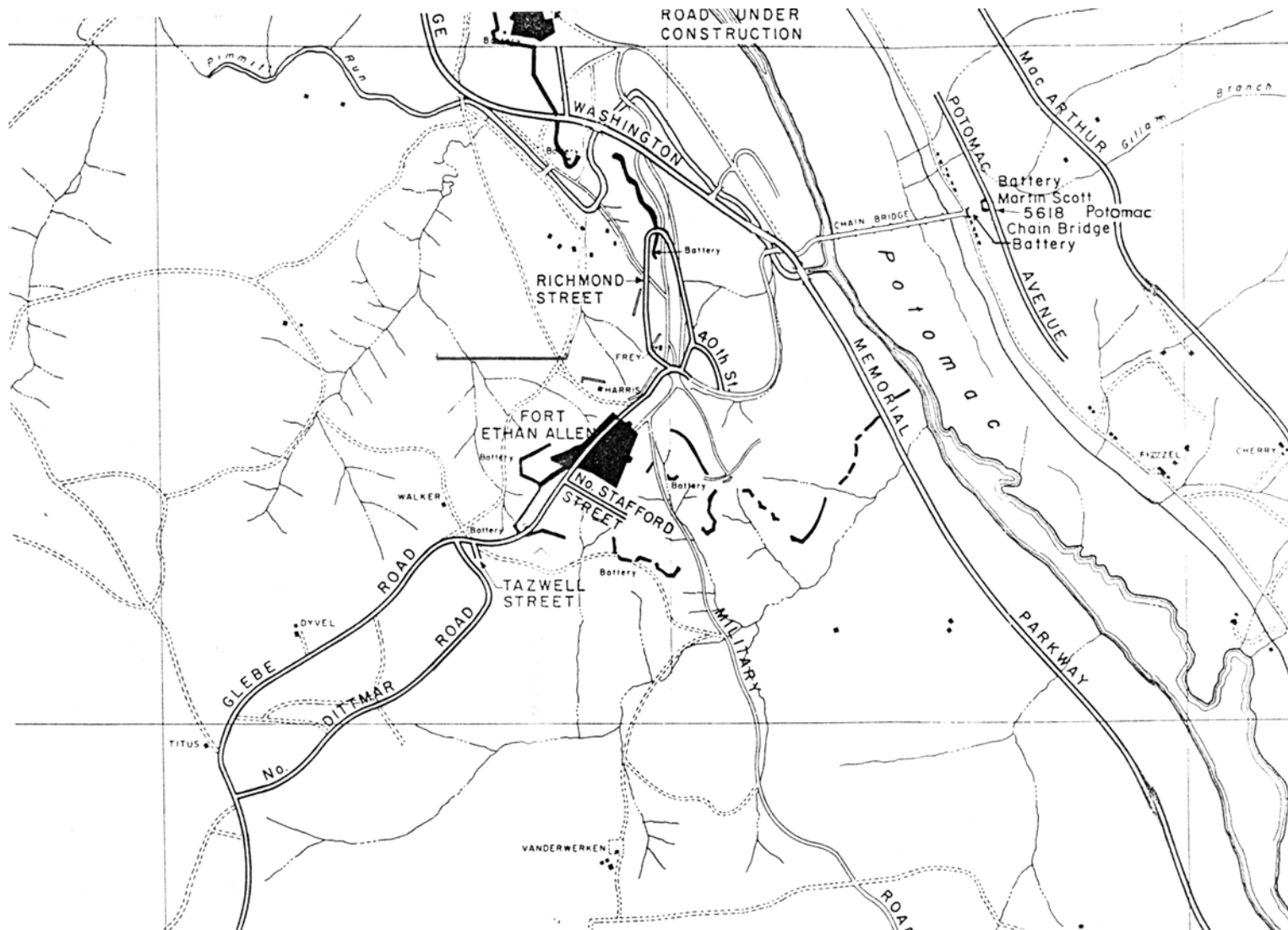


Figure 1. Map of the Fort Ethan Allen area, Arlington County.
David V. Miller, *The Defenses of Washington During the Civil War* (Buffalo, NY: Mr. Copy, 1976).

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Figure 2. Battery M, 2nd New York Heavy Artillery, August 1865, Fort Ethan Allen.
Benjamin Franklin Cooling III and Walton H. Owen II, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, Inc., 1988) 119.

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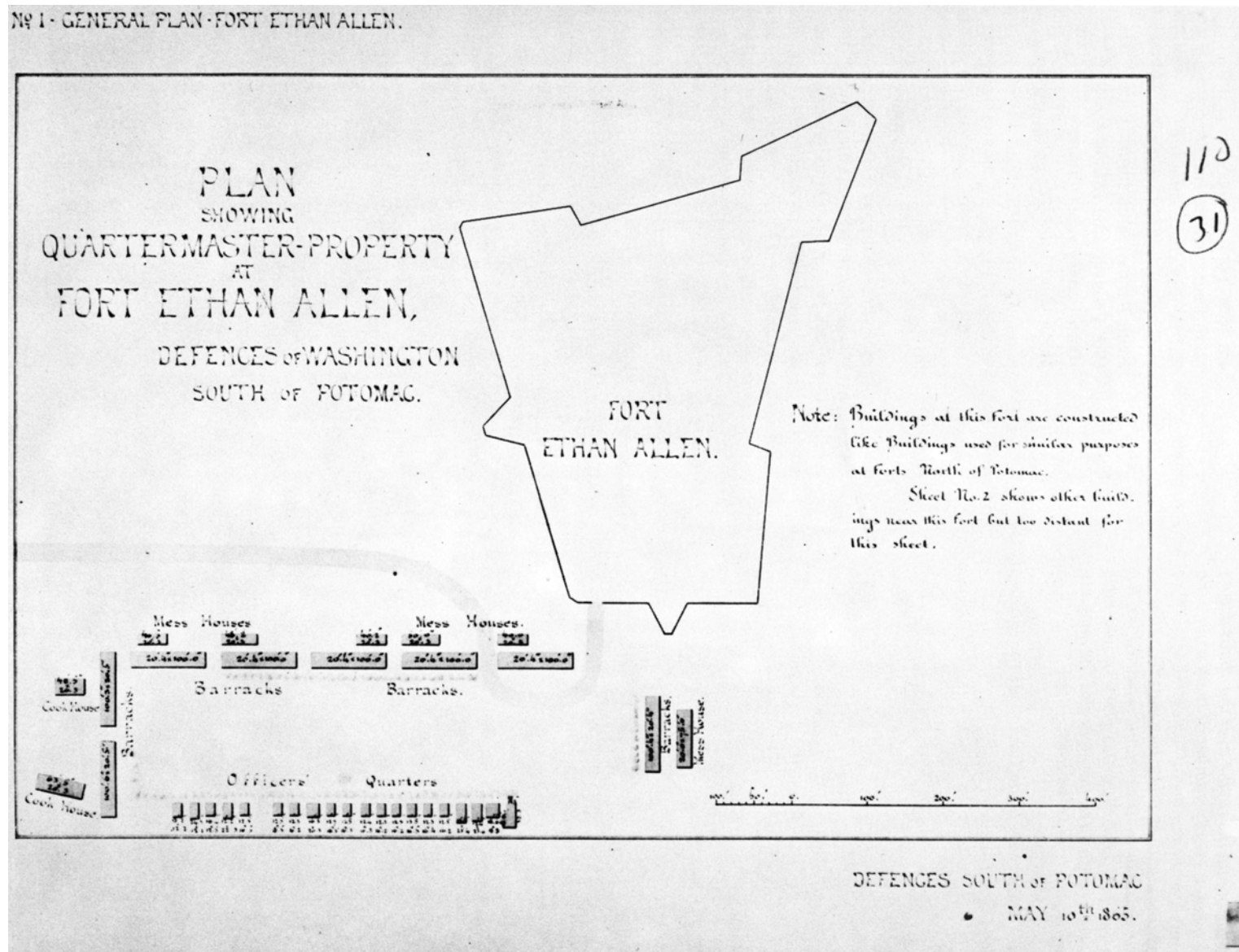


Figure 3. Plan of Quartermaster Property, Fort Ethan Allen.
Cooling and Owen, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts*, 120.

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DHR File Number 000-5819/Archeological Number 44AR0029

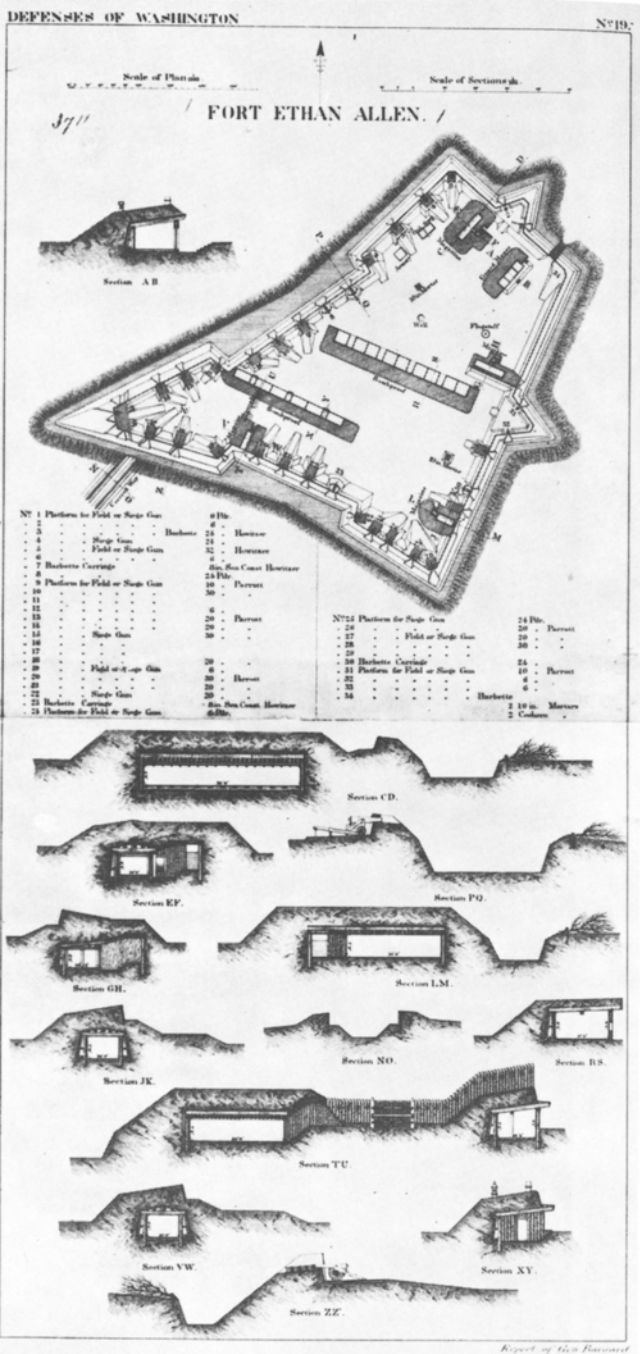


Figure 4. Fort Ethan Allen, Engineer Drawing
Cooling and Owen, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts*, 118.

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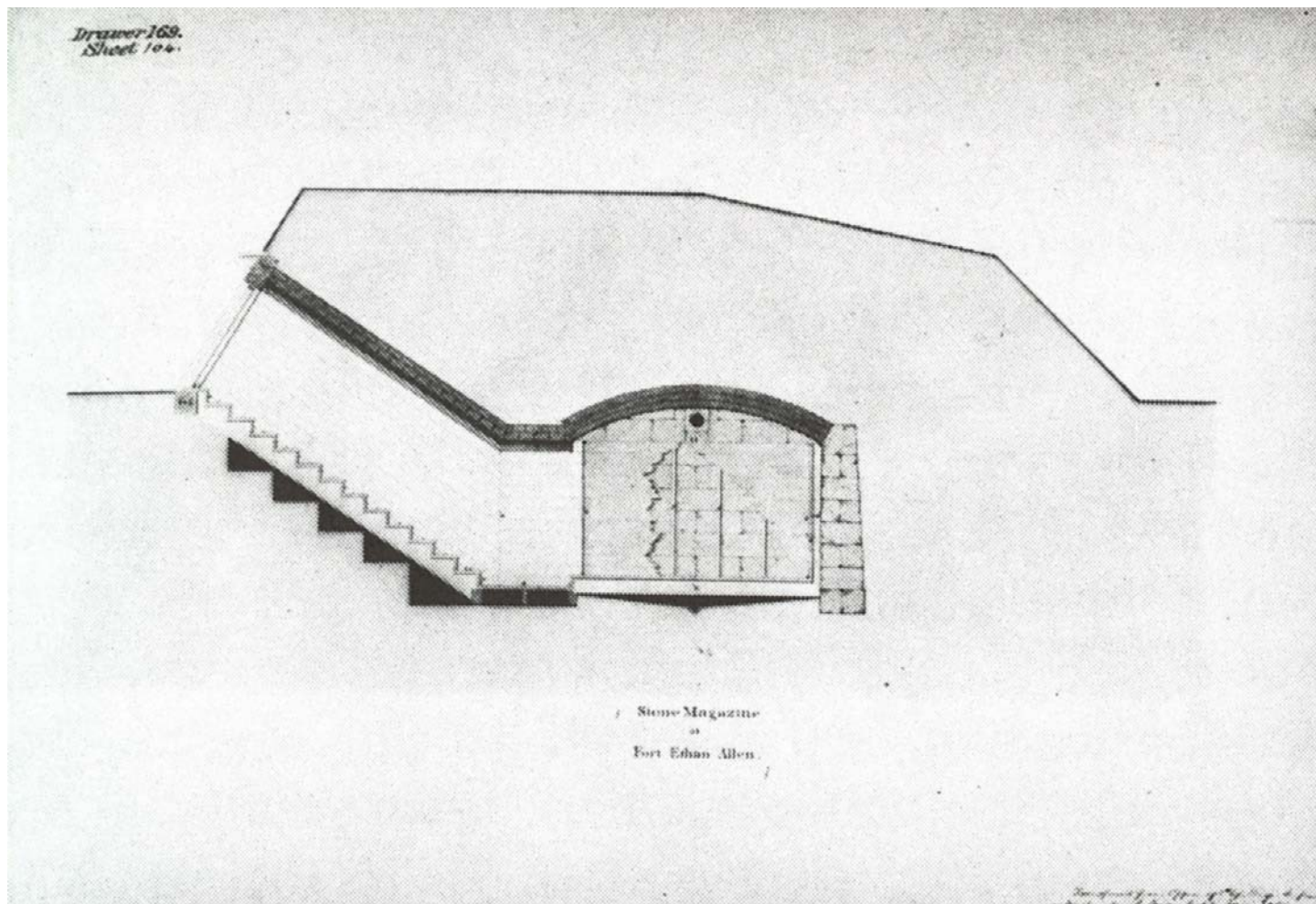


Figure 5. Engineer Design for Magazine at Fort Ethan Allen.
Cooling and Owen, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts*, 19.

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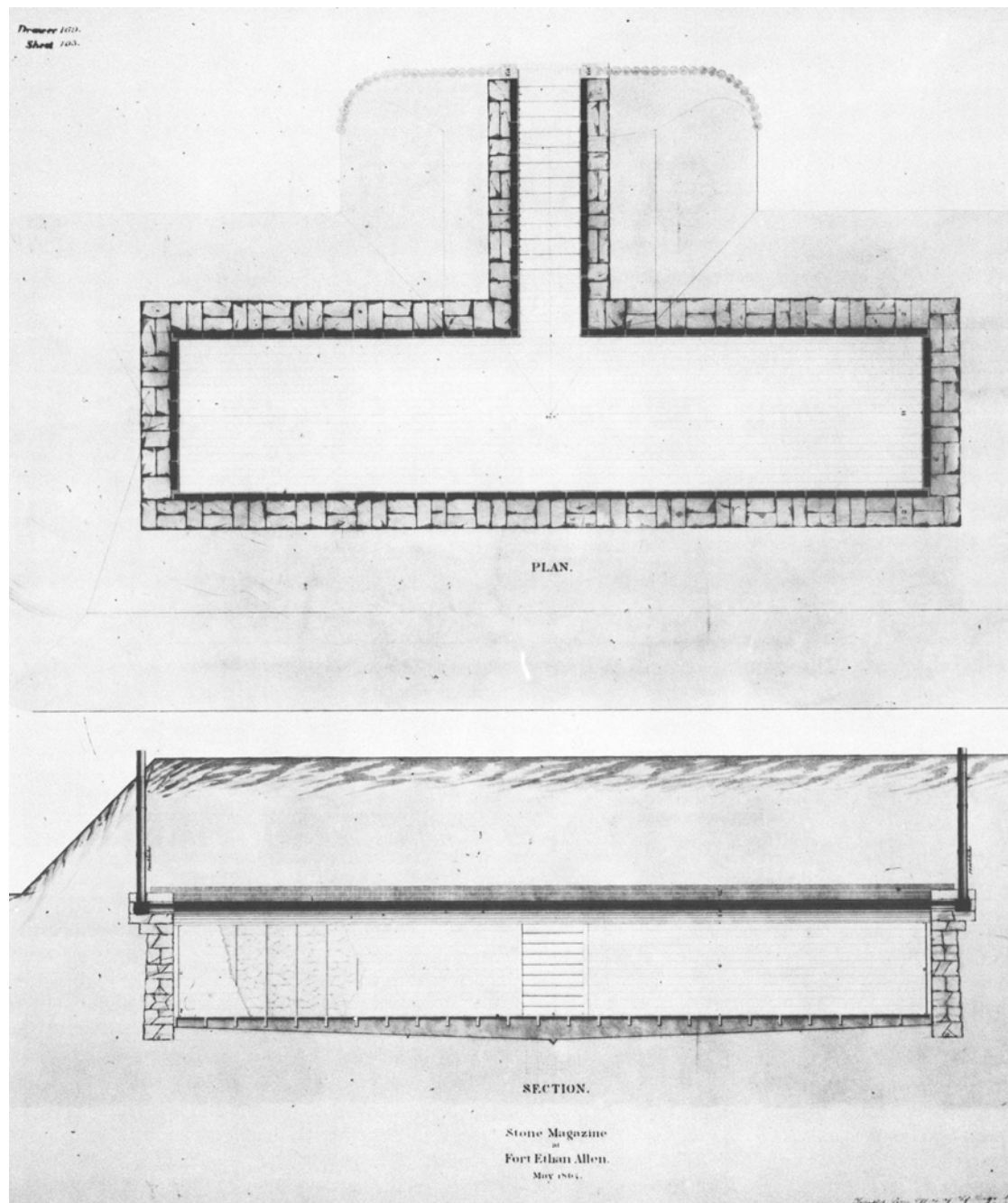


Figure 6. Plan and Section of Stone Magazine.
Cooling and Owen, *Mr. Lincoln's Forts*, 121.